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CONSOLATORY VIEWS OF CHRISTIANITY,

A

SERMON,

PREACHED IN THE CHAPEL IN

PRINCES STREET, WESTMINSTER,

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER XXVII, MDCCXCVI.

UPON OCCASION OF THE DEATH OF

MRS. ELIZABETH KIPPIS,

WHO DEPARTED THIS LIFE ON THE SEVENTEENTH DAY
OF THE SAME MONTH,

IN THE SEVENTY-SECOND YEAR OF HER AGE.

By THOMAS JERVIS.

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MDCCXCVI.

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

MEMORANDUM

TO THE PRESIDENT

FROM THE DEAN

SUBJECT: [Illegible]

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A

S E R M O N.

IN selecting the words of my text, I am limited by the wishes of one who is now no more. In the course of the past week I have been called, to pay the last tribute of respect to her memory, by attending her mortal remains to their silent abode. The relict of your late venerable pastor had repeatedly expressed a desire, that he would, whenever it should please the Almighty to remove her out of this world, address a discourse to this congregation upon a particular passage of scripture, which she thought applicable, though not peculiar, to her own situation. But as, contrary to all human probability, it seemed fit to infinite wisdom that she should be the mourning

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and afflicted survivor, that office devolves upon him who now addresses you. And, accordingly, in willing compliance with what has been stated to me as the particular request of the deceased, I would submit to the consideration of this respectable auditory, the reflections that have occurred to my mind, upon the subject of those instructive and consolatory words :

IT IS GOOD THAT A MAN SHOULD BOTH
HOPE AND QUIETLY WAIT FOR THE
SALVATION OF THE LORD.

LAMENTATIONS III. 26.

In the Lamentations of Jeremiah, which are annexed to his prophecies, and which bear strong internal marks of being the production of the same pen, the author has not adhered to the rigid laws of composition ; but, regardless of an artificial order and arrangement, has given vent to the feelings and emotions of his mind in abrupt, unconnected, and irregular strains. There is a natural eloquence in grief, which is not studied or methodical,

thodical, but exquisitely tender and pathetic. It is not restrained by the chaste rules of criticism, nor involved in the laboured refinements of a cold and fastidious philosophy. It touches the inward springs and movements of the mind as with a secret and fascinating power, which by turns awakens and depresses, animates and dissolves, electrifies and captivates the soul. It speaks the moving sentiments of sorrow in a style simple, yet glowing, figurative, diffuse and amplified; uttering the plaintive notes of woe in the artless and irresistible language of the heart. Such is the character of the book of Lamentations, which may properly be considered as an elegiac poem; and which it is impossible for any reader of taste and feeling to peruse without taking a lively interest in the subject to which it relates. The prophet foresees the impending calamities of his devoted and unhappy country; and represents the disasters it was destined to suffer in strong and lively colouring, as if its fate had been already decided. He describes the circumstances of complicated misery and distress,

desolation and horror, attending this awful catastrophe, in copious, forcible, and energetic terms; and deplores the final overthrow of the Jewish city and temple, the famine, the carnage, the ruin, and utter extermination of the people, with the utmost variety, pathos, and tenderness of expression. It was the opinion of a late eminent prelate*, highly accomplished in sacred literature, that there is no poem extant which contains so many beautiful and splendid passages within so small a compass. Is there any thing to be found, says that learned, ingenious, and elegant writer, so truly poetical, as the personification of that great city, once the pride and glory of the nations, now sitting like a widow, lonely, sorrowful and dejected; deserted and betrayed by those who were nearest to her heart; stretching forth her hands for relief, but in vain! since there is none left to pity and console her. How beautifully are the ways of Sion represented as bewailing that her solemn festivals are neglected and forsaken! How touching

* See Bishop Lowth, *De sacra poesi Hebræorum*, Præl. 22 sub fin.

and

and expressive is that complaint ! “Is it nothing to you, O ye that pass along ! stay, and see, if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is inflicted upon me, yea, which is inflicted by Jehovah in the day of his awful displeasure. For this cause it is that I weep, my eyes streaming with tears ; because I have no friend to relieve the anguish of my troubled spirit : my comforter is gone ! my children are become desolate, since the enemy has prevailed against us.”

The passage which is to be the subject of our present reflections, as detached from the main subject of the poem, contains a general sentiment of religious trust, of patient resignation, and of animating hope ; a sentiment replete with comfort, and fruitful of instruction to the children of sorrow ; but which may also suggest a profitable subject of meditation to all ; since affliction is the lot of all ; and all must, at one time or another, expect to share in those sufferings and trials which are inseparable from the condition of humanity.

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“ It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord.” These words may be considered as expressive of the sentiments of virtuous men, either amidst scenes of public calamity, or in situations of private distress.

In times of public danger and national affliction, where shall the good man find a resource, but in the consolations of virtue, and the prospects of christianity ? While the practical statesman is calculating the events of war or peace, or devising new schemes of personal ambition or national aggrandizement ; while the political philosopher is engaged on speculative plans for advancing the commerce, the manufactures, the agriculture and population of his country ; how can the christian patriot be more wisely and worthily employed than in reforming the manners, which is the first step towards promoting the happiness and prosperity of the people ? In troubled and disastrous times, when a guilty land is afflicted with the awful scourge of
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general calamity, will he not watchfully observe, and clearly discern the signs of the times? When the supreme ruler of the world rises in his anger, and the nations are not able to abide his indignation, whither shall the righteous flee for refuge? To whom shall he betake himself in the day of evil, but to his maker and his God? While he uses every exertion, in his individual capacity, to check the torrent of vice, to extinguish the flames of discord, or to appease the angry tumult of the waves that toss themselves on high; will he not, in a firm persuasion that the judge of all the earth cannot but do right, “both hope and quietly wait” for national safety and deliverance at his hands? The prophet Jeremiah, in the genuine spirit of piety, philanthropy, and true patriotism, most pathetically laments the vices, the misfortunes, and the total ruin of his country. And it is obvious, that the words of the text, in their primary sense, and their original connexion, literally relate to the state of the public.

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But it is more immediately the object of this discourse, and more suitable to our present purpose, to apply the reflection in the text to the situation of good men under circumstances of personal trial and distress. And it may be truly said, that, under such circumstances, there is no greater relief, no surer remedy, than “for a man both to hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord.”

The beneficial effects of suffering and trial upon the human mind, are various and important. These are illustrated by the prophet, in affecting and impressive terms, in the verses subsequent to the text. “It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth :” it is good for a man to be inured betimes to the wholesome restraints, and the early discipline of affliction. Though a deep gloom should obscure the morning of his day, yet the labouring clouds will at length retire before the enlivening warmth and lustre of the sun, and his mind will be prepared for the mild serenity and the tranquil repose of the evening. “He sitteth alone, and keep-
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eth silence :” Grief and misfortune have a natural tendency to lead him to serious thought; and incline him to reflect on the errors of his past conduct, and on the wise and equal measures of the divine administration. “ He putteth his mouth in the dust, if so be there may be hope :” he humbles himself before the great arbiter of all the actions of mankind, with the lowest prostration of spirit; earnestly imploring that he may yet rise to behold the light, and feel the joy, of his approving eye. “ For he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men :” the father of mercies is influenced by no harsh resentment towards his offending creatures; much less does he take a cruel and ferocious delight in their sufferings, or exercise upon them the stern and imperious authority of a gloomy and inexorable tyrant. The majesty of the divine government knows no caprice, or petulance, or revenge. Its penalties and corrections are designed to promote the virtue and the true happiness of its subjects. “ Why then should a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins ?” This is

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a powerful argument against murmuring, repining, and fretfulness under the rod of affliction: it is directed by a divine hand; it is appointed to chastise the refractory and incorrigible, to turn the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to reclaim the wandering, and restore the penitent to God. It humbles the pride, corrects the vanity, and softens the obduracy of the human heart; it controuls the petulance and perverseness of the unchastised temper; it allays the ferment, and cools the raging fever, of the passions; it curbs the unruly and impetuous desires; composes the tumults, and heals the various disorders of the mind: it meliorates and regulates the affections, gives energy and expansion to the best feelings of human nature, and opens all the sluices and evanues of the soul.

Such are the happy and benign effects of affliction upon the untutored and inexperienced mind. It proves a most useful and friendly instructor; it teaches the most profitable lessons; it suggests considerations of the highest moment and advantage; it calls
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the inconsiderate and thoughtless to reflection, checks the giddy career of the votaries of pleasure, and overawes even the daring profligacy of the wicked and ungodly.

But the mind which is rightly exercised by afflictions, and prepared to reap those wholesome fruits of righteousness which they produce, will derive the highest advantage from that rich source of consolation which is no where so clearly discovered to us, and so fully ascertained, as in the system of christianity. Those who sincerely adopt this system will find peculiar satisfaction and advantage in the frequent contemplation of the condition and conduct of its founder. That holy person was himself "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." It is therefore of importance to consider him under this particular view of his character. We are informed that he "learned obedience "to the will of God" by the things which he suffered;" and that "in bringing many sons to glory," he was himself "made perfect through sufferings." He was placed in

the most trying and difficult circumstances, which put his integrity and fortitude to the sternest proof ; he passed through the furnace of affliction ; and attained to that exalted degree of purity, and that dignified pre-eminence in virtue, which gave splendor to his character, by the steep and rugged path of labour and sorrow. While, therefore, it should reconcile us to the bitter draught of affliction, to consider, that it is an excellent medicine for the maladies of the mind ; we should likewise propose to ourselves the conduct of our master, who drank deep of that nauseous cup, and was himself trained in the austere school of adversity — we should propose his conduct to ourselves, as a worthy example of tried virtue, sublime constancy, and patient endurance. When, by the visitation of God, we are afflicted ; when we droop beneath the stroke of his correcting hand, and our souls are melted because of trouble ; then let us consider him who, having “ himself suffered, being tempted, is able to succour them that are tempted ; ” and, like him, let us bow to the will
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of heaven with a patient and dutiful submission. The apostle observes that, in this, as "in all things, it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren." And since he was accordingly subject to sorrow, in common with all his faithful followers, upon what ground can they plead for an exemption? Can they reasonably expect to suffer fewer evils, or to pass through fewer trials than it fell to his lot to endure; or to enjoy more comforts than were apportioned to him "in the days of his flesh?" They will do well to consider, that "the disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord: it is enough for the disciple to be," in this respect, "as his master, and the servant as his lord." And as he, animated by "the joy that was set before him," with heroic constancy "endured the cross, despising the shame;" so, fired by his example, and inspired by the christian hope which he hath set before them, the hope of entering hereafter into those mansions which he is gone to prepare for them in heaven; his true disciples

ciples will “deny themselves” the indulgences of an useless and inglorious ease, and of unbecoming and unmanly pleasures; “and take up the cross” of suffering and affliction; “and follow” the apostle and high priest of their profession; they will follow him through honour and dishonour, through good report and evil report; and, if called to so arduous a trial, through the fires of persecution, the terrors of imprisonment, and the tortures of death. “Having fellowship with Christ, they will hold fast the principle on which they stand, firmly to the end*,” and, like the martyrs and confessors of old, though enveloped in the consuming flame, or writhing with anguish upon the rack, they will maintain their fidelity to him who sealed the truth with his blood. Amidst all the torments that bigotry and ingenuity can devise, whilst the horrid engine of superstition is employed to execute the dreadful work of cruelty and intolerance; though the body be mangled and torn, the spirit will continue firm, unbroken, and erect; and, in the

* Heb. iii. 6. see Mr. Wakefield's Translation.

last extremity of nature, the sufferer will bear his dying testimony to the faith of Jesus with a faltering voice, perhaps, but with an unshaken magnanimity and zeal ; “ It is a faithful saying ; if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him ; if we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him ; ” reign with him in that world where alone an exemption is to be found from all grief, disquietude and pain.

The righteous have the greatest encouragement to the exercise of hope and patience under the pressure of affliction. Says the prophet Jeremiah, in the verse preceding the text, “ the Lord is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him.” David observes that, “ many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of them all : ” And again, “ though weeping may continue for a night, yet joy cometh in the morning.” The night may be restless and disturbed with bodily pain and uneasiness, or with anxious and melancholy reflections ; but by and by the breaking day will dawn, and the light
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of the sun will return; its cheering beams will dispel the darkness, and brighten the gloom that overshadowed the mind. Can there be a stronger incentive to patience under any trial, than the assured hope of final deliverance and safety? The poor affrighted mariner, when tossed upon the troubled ocean, while the merciless winds are exhausting their fury upon his shattered vessel, sees death in its most terrific form, hovering on the broken wave, and expects to be soon overwhelmed in the horrors of shipwreck, and buried in the fathomless abyss. But what vigor and alacrity would it give to his exertions, amidst the crashing noise of the cordage, the violence of the foaming surge, the rage of the elements, and the terror and distraction of those around him, were it possible for him to possess any hope, any degree of assurance, that he should yet weather the storm, and navigate his ship safe into the destined port? Such is the consolation and the joy which the good man will experience in his own breast, when embarked upon that "sea of troubles" through which he must pass:

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though the roaring billows of adversity should threaten him with instant destruction, yet he has not lost the anchor of hope ; he still remains tranquil and serene, in the conscious persuasion that God will be his protector, that he will enable him to perform the voyage of life with security and advantage, and finally bring him to the haven where he would be. But what must be the condition of that man, who, when the storm of affliction begins to rise, has no ground of hope and trust in God ? Hitherto, perhaps, he has not been in trouble like other men. Indifferent to the future, he has not looked beyond the present moment. He has given a loose to the impulse of his passions, and has withheld his heart from no joy. But now the scene is changed ; the brightness of the morning is past away, and his day is darkened with clouds. His path is become obscure and intricate. His mind is involved in doubt, perplexity and fear. He gives way to a fretful impatience of temper, which has no other effect than to gall and irritate his wounded spirit. He renounces all hope of deliverance

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from his sufferings; and, while his heart is sinking within him, gives vent to the suggestions of a bitter and gloomy despondency: "When I looked for good, then came evil unto me; and when I waited for light, there came darkness:"—"behold, this evil is of the Lord; why should I wait for the Lord any longer?"

The virtuous only know, how good it is "that a man should both hope and quietly wait for salvation" in the day of calamity. They know that this is good for him, even in the prospect of temporal comfort and relief; and they know that it is still better and more encouraging to him, if he takes into the account the joyful hope of immortality which is made known to the world by Jesus Christ. The christian hope is the most effectual remedy against the evils of human life. It will calm the troubled mind, and soothe the anguish of the heart broken with affliction. It will reconcile us to our condition, how distressful soever it be; and will lead us to place our confidence where alone
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it can never be deceived. In times of outward trouble and distress we have no refuge, but God. And if, in the exercise of patience and of hope, we refer ourselves to the all-wise disposer, there is no state so discouraging, from which he is not able to extricate, no trial so severe, under which he is not willing to relieve us. If we have no ground of trust in him, is there aught else on which we can rely? Is there any other being in the universe in whom we can confide? If we have no confidence in God, our hope is as the spider's web; we can derive no consolation from the promises of the most High. If we have no hope in his mercy, "we wait for light, but behold, obscurity! for brightness, but we walk in darkness: we stumble at noon-day as in the night." But we have every reason, every encouragement to put our sole trust and hope in God. And it will prove our surest antidote against the evils that assail us, to cherish the virtues of patience in suffering, an unshaken constancy in adversity, and an unwearied perseverance in the path of duty. Then, what though the path be rugged and

beset with thorns; yet our feet shall not tremble on the dark mountains of death. What though an host encamp against us, and the adversaries of our peace be numerous and potent; yet if God be on our side, of whom shall we be afraid? His arm will prevail against all the weapons of war, and all the combined powers of the world. Are we involved in circumstances of poverty, perplexity and doubt? Is the candle of the Lord put out in our tabernacle? Yet let us seek light from above; let us "rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him;" and the voice of joy and gladness will again be heard in the dwellings of the righteous.

Then whatever, O christian! be thy present sorrow, yet be not thou dismayed. Thou mayest suffer now; yet relinquish not the hope of thy calling. Perhaps, it is thy lot to be visited by one, or many, of those evils that are grievous, yet common to human nature. Perhaps thy prospect is obscured, and the decrees of providence are enveloped in darkness: perhaps, God hides his face behind the cloud, and withdraws the
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light of his countenance; yet it is but for a little while; and thou shalt again behold him in righteousness and mercy. Perhaps, like the venerable prophet, thou bewailest the sinfulness and desolation of the land, the vices and miseries of the people, and the judgments that are abroad in the earth. Perhaps, "thou art grieved for the afflictions of Joseph;" thou art troubled on account of the unmerited sufferings of those who are allied to thee in friendship or in blood; or, thou art filled with unavailing regret and sorrow for those misfortunes in which they are involved by reason of their own folly and indiscretion. Perhaps, the friend whom thou lovedst, has betrayed and forsaken thee; or, thou art deeply distressed at the thought, that thou canst see his face no more in this world. But, perhaps, thou art careful and troubled for thyself; perplexed with the embarrassment of outward circumstances, or alarmed with fears about the uncertainty of thy future condition. Perhaps, O child of adversity! thou minglest thy drink with weeping, while thy heart languishes with the secret desire of some distant good,

good, or is oppressed with gloomy care and discontent, on account of some hidden grief and disappointment. Thou art made to possess months of vanity, and wearisome nights are appointed to thee: Perhaps, thy body is chastened with strong pain, and the joy and vigour of health has forsaken thee: Yet, "why art thou cast down? Hope in God; for thou mayest yet praise him, who is the health of thy countenance." But, thy constitution is undermined by some wasting disease, or yielding to the rapid advances of dissolution; thou art stretched on the bed of pain, and, with solemn preparation, art going down to the grave: Yet, "refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears; for thy work shall be rewarded, and there is hope in thine end." But thy innocence, perhaps, is fallen under the lash of evil tongues; thy good fame is become the cruel sport of obloquy, the mark at which malice and detraction aim their envenomed shafts: Remember, that the Lord seeth not as man seeth; he looketh on the heart; and he alone judgeth
righteous

righteous judgment : Then, commit thy
 cause to him, who knoweth the way that
 thou takest ; who “ will bring forth thy
 righteousness as the light, and thy judgment
 as the noon-day.” Perhaps, thou art cruelly
 and wrongfully deprived of liberty, that
 choicest blessing, which gives the sweetest re-
 lish to all the comforts of life : A solitary
 victim, thou art immured in some gloomy
 cell : the fetters that chain thy debilitated
 body to the ground, but cannot arrest the
 unfettered, the unconquerable spirit, are
 less galling than the iron hand of ~~oppression~~ *depression*
 that bears heavy on thy soul : a stranger to
 the light of heaven, to the sound of the
 human voice, and the sight of the hu-
 man face divine, entombed in some dark
 and noisome dungeon, thou hast found a
 living grave. Or, thou art driven indignant
 from thy dear native shores ; doomed, like
 the ⁿunprofitable weed, to vegetate in some
 foreign soil ; condemned to waste the devo-
 ted years of thy remaining life, and thy
 noble energies of mind in untimely and
 vacant inactivity ; to sicken at the thought,
 that, with thee, the kind intercourses of so-
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ciety, the generous ties of friendship and of love, and all the tender charities of life are painfully suspended, not dissolved, while friend and brother are put far from thee : unable to extricate thyself from the lawless grasp of power, an outcast from the world, thy mind is thy own kingdom ; thy integrity is thy impenetrable shield ; yet, thou art languishing in distant exile under the oppressor's wrongs, the contumely of the proud, and the lawless rage and violence of the wicked : Still, God is thy hope in the evil day ; and thou mayest adopt the language of devout confidence, of dignified resignation, and of holy triumph ; “ I will look unto the Lord, I will wait for the God of my salvation : my God will hear me : ” then, “ rejoice not against me, O mine enemy ! when I fall, I shall arise ; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me. ” Thus, what ever be thy destiny in this hard world, however severe thy lot, or grievous the burden of thy cares, thou wilt not fall into a snare through the unmanly fear of man ; but wilt cast all thy care upon God ; thou wilt hold fast thy in-

integrity untainted, unblemished, and unshaken in the day of visitation ; thou wilt maintain thy consistency of character, thy elevation of mind, the dignity of virtue, and the honour of christianity : thou wilt experience the divine joy of believing, and the heavenly consolation of hope ; and wilt hear the voice of God, who addresses thee in those solacing and animating words : “ When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee : and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee : when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned ; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee : For I am the Lord thy God, the holy one of Israel, thy Saviour.

Having said so much in illustration of the sentiment in the text, that, in all the scenes of worldly sorrow and affliction, “ it is good for us both to hope and quietly wait for salvation ” and deliverance ; I would now exhort you, my christian friends, to the assiduous exercise of this hope and patient expectation.

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And, with this view, I would especially recommend it to you, to cherish an unre-served trust and reliance on the truth and faithfulness of God for the accomplishment of all his promises. We are forewarned, from the beginning, that "we must, through much tribulation, enter into the kingdom of God." Accordingly, the first professors of christianity were obliged to endure poverty, reproach and persecution, and to encounter death itself in every shape of terror; but they continued "patient in tribulation, rejoicing in hope." We have the earliest and the highest authority for the assertion, that "in the world we shall have tribulation." Of this we are fairly apprized by him who hath shewn his followers an eminent example of magnanimity and patience. And in this respect, we have not been deceived. It is the lot of the christian still to feel that many are the trials of virtue; he is placed in a state of perpetual and severe discipline, and called to the daily exercise of his constancy, fortitude, integrity and patience. And, such is the effect of this discipline upon the mind that is properly disposed, that

that "they that have come out of much tribulation," are commonly found to be the most magnanimous in the hour of trial, the most patient in suffering, and the most prompt, active and vigilant in situations of danger and distress. But, when we consider the objects of the christian's hope, that they are beyond the reach of our present enjoyment, that they are invisible, that they are future, and only in reversion, it must be acknowledged, that the circumstances of our present condition afford ample scope for the exercise of patience. The unworthy servant, in the parable, neglected his duty, forgot his fidelity to his master, and took the most ungrateful advantage of his long absence, under this slender and disingenuous pretext, "My Lord delayeth his coming." And this affords a just representation of the general infatuation of the men of the world. Their views are narrow and confined; and they put far from them the evil day of reckoning and account. Under the strong impressions of present and precarious good, they forget their real interests, and are content to resign the solid and durable advan-

tages that result from the practice of virtue, the testimony of conscience, and the approbation of God. They choose the instant “pleasures of sin, which are but for a season,” rather than wait for those future joys which are satisfactory, permanent and sublime. In the consideration, that “sentence against their evil works is not executed speedily against them,” the profligate find a fallacious pretence for persisting in their vices. And it is to be regretted, that the case is too often reversed: the faithful are discouraged in their progresss, and are ready to falter in the noble career of glory and virtue, because the recompence of their obedience is not speedily awarded to them.

It has been observed by one, renowned for wisdom, and enrolled among the sacred writers, that “hope deferred maketh the heart sick.” If it be not accompanied with a full assurance, its ardour may fail. And, although it be a passion, that naturally inspires the most delightful sensations, that presents the most enchanting images and prospects, and excites the most animating
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and vigorous exertions; yet, through the long delay that sometimes attends its accomplishment, the mind, if not duly fortified by just principles and views, or if weakened and relaxed by outward evils and disappointments, may be in danger of sinking into a state of despondency and distrust, and of fainting in the day of adversity.

But, Christians, we must not give way to gloomy and discouraging views. We must not fall into a state of languor, inactivity, and delay in the discharge of our duty. Much less may we seek an excuse to throw off the yoke of obedience, to relax in our diligence and zeal, or relinquish our patience and our hope. We may groan under the load of numerous, heavy, and accumulated evils; our sufferings may be complicated, increasing, and without any immediate prospect of outward alleviation or relief; but we must consider, that in judgment God remembereth mercy; and we must implore his powerful aid and support, that our faith fail not. Be our condition ever so afflicted, we must consider that God hath "fixed from the first the appointed times
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and boundaries of our habitation : ” we must not, therefore, be impatient and discontented in the station in which he hath placed us ; but must remain at the post of duty and of trial, until he shall think fit to relieve us. His hand is not shortened that he cannot save ; he knows what is the proper season in which to effect our deliverance ; and we must refer it entirely to his most wise and benevolent determination.

With these views, the virtuous sufferer may even “ glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope ; that hope which maketh not ashamed ; ” that hope which is far superior to all earthly hopes ; that hope of christianity which is our best friend and associate in the journey of life, which will not desert us in the dark vale of death, but will accompany us into that world where hope will be lost in enjoyment. And, for the completion of this hope, we have the promise of the eternal God. The object of it is, indeed, distant ; but it is, nevertheless, sure and certain, since “ he is faithful who hath pro-

promised." We hope for things unseen, or seen only by the eye of faith; "but hope, that is attained, is not hope: for how can a man hope for what he hath attained? So then, as we can hope only for what we have not attained, let us wait with patience."

"Ye have need of patience, says the apostle, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye may inherit the promise." And let us reflect, for a moment, what is comprehended in this phrase, of inheriting the promise? It comprehends more than our highest hopes, or our largest desires can embrace. It furnishes the richest stores of consolation, and displays to the view of the christian, the incorruptible, the inexhaustible treasures of heaven. It implies all that we can conceive of life, and light, and salvation, and deliverance, in the fullest and the amplest sense of those words—life, beyond the flow-consuming power of mortality; light, beyond the darkness of the tomb; salvation, from the loss and ruin of all that is valuable to the intellectual nature of man; and deliverance,
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from the bondage of sin, from the embarrassments of the world, from the anguish of pain, from remorse, and guilt, and inquietude, and care, and grief, and all the excruciating tortures of the mind; from the pressure of all natural evil, and from the inexorable hand of death. "This is the promise which God hath promised;" it is the promise of eternal life; it is the promise of an immortal existence beyond the power of time; existence in a state where sorrow shall be turned into joy, and the shadow of death into the morning.

If these representations be just, is it not good to wait for that great salvation, which is promised to the righteous? How rich and munificent are the rewards of persevering virtue! And bright and splendid is the prize of immortality. Is it not, then, a noble incentive to a patient perseverance in well-doing, to consider, that we have the promise of an eternal inheritance; that the severity of their present trials will be infinitely compensated and overbalanced by the lustre, the mag-

magnitude, the extent, and durability, of that reward which is reserved for the tried and faithful votaries of religion? "For I reckon, says St. Paul, that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." And, surely, those light afflictions, which are but for a moment, are not to be named in competition, or in comparison, with that imperishable glory, that unalloyed delight, and that substantial bliss, which the great rewarder of virtue, the faithful friend and patron of the righteous, will one day bestow upon his people, when he shall finally bring them to his heavenly kingdom.

But, when will that kingdom come? When will that day of salvation arrive? Where is that deliverer, whose appearance we have long been led to expect? "And where is the promise of his coming?" Thus may some men, in the moments of infidelity or despondency, be ready to exclaim; unwisely arguing, that, "because all things continue as they were from the beginning

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of the creation," therefore, no great alteration shall take place in the constitution of things, no material change in the condition of human beings. But this way of reasoning betrays a narrow mind, and a perverted judgment. So limited are our views, when compared (if they can be compared) with those of the supreme and infinite mind, that we can draw no conclusion in regard to the times and the seasons; for we cannot be "ignorant, that one day," in the calendar of human calculation, "is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years but as one day." Wherefore, as the apostle infers, "the Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us ward;" willing to allow time for reformation even to those who are negligent and dilatory; regarding with approbation the motives, the intentions, and the actions of the upright; and faithful to reward, at his own time, that time which is most conducive to the ultimate good of his creatures, the work of faith, the labour of love, and the patience of hope.

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Then, let us not be weary in well doing ; let us not loiter in the road of honour and virtue, nor deviate into the by-paths of dependency on the one hand, or of sloth on the other ; let us not disgracefully recede from our engagements, through the vain and delusive presumption, that the day of retribution is a distant day : but, “ though it tarry, wait for it ; because it will surely come, it will not tarry long.” Without alacrity and vigour, - the secular employments of this life must soon come to an end, the business of the world must stand still. Those who are occupied in the arts of honest industry, commonly obtain their end by patient labour, by active and vigorous exertions ; and those who are eager in quest of gain, making haste to be rich, are not discouraged by obstacles, but rise early, and late take rest, and eat the bread of care, and are assiduous, alert, and persevering in the pursuit of their object. “ Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain : be ye also patient, for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.” His faith

ful servants earnestly look and long for his appearing ; they wait for him as those that wait for the morning ; and, like the mother of Sifera, are ready to complain of his tardy advances, and his long delay, in the language of anxious and impatient desire ; “ Why is his chariot so long in coming ; why tarry the wheels of his chariot ? ”——“ Yet a little while, and he that shall come, will come and will not tarry.” To the ungodly, his approach will be attended with the fearful tokens of terror and dismay. But welcome, welcome to the righteous will be the day of his coming ! To them, it will be a day of exultation and triumph ; for he will not come cloathed in thunder ; he will lay aside the awful severity of the judge, and appear with the mild majesty of a deliverer, a father, and a friend.

Let those who are dissatisfied with these views, which christianity opens to the contemplation of its votaries, seek some better system of consolation. The cold reasonings of philosophy, and the obscure and imperfect suggestions of natural religion will afford but little joy to the wounded heart, but a faint
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gleam of light to cheer the darkness of the mind. But what resource has he, who is ignorant of the true principles both of philosophy and natural religion, and who has, at the same time, quitted the only firm ground he had to stand upon, the ground of christian hope and consolation? The little, selfish pride of an unfeeling heart, or the poor pretensions of a self-assumed importance, or, perhaps, a constitutional strength and vigour of mind, may avail him in the common casualties and exigencies of life. Tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine, of prejudice, of paradox, how will he be able to repel the shafts of affliction? When the waves of trouble beat, or some sweeping calamity overtakes him, like a torrent from the mountains, where will he then find a refuge from the storm? Let him fly to the gloomy doubts of scepticism, or to the wild and fanatical dreams of modern infidelity. There let him seek an antidote against the ills of life, a lenitive for the sorrows of the mind, a cordial for corroding care and griefs that harrow up the soul. But let the christian possess himself in patience and in peace. Those who act agreeably to the rational principles of pure, uncorrupted christianity, and hold
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fast the profession of their faith without wavering, will never feel the comfort and advantage of that profession and of those principles, so sensibly as in the hour of sorrow. Then, ~~forbear~~, fear not, little flock, for it is your father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Cast not away your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. "Wait the promise of the father:" and be assured, that it will not be long ere it be fully accomplished. Wait in earnest expectation of that immortal day, which will prove the joyful consummation of your wishes and your hopes. "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord."

I shall conclude this discourse by observing, that, in the exercise of christian hope and patience, we may derive no small encouragement from the example of good men in all ages. Sacred history will furnish us with a multitude of virtuous and venerable characters, who deserve to be held in everlasting remembrance. The prophets are proposed to us as patterns "of suffering affliction and
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of patience." The servants of God are characterised in scripture, as those "who wait for his son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus." And, "waiting for the coming of Christ," is there considered as an evidence and a test of the sincerity of his followers; who, for their encouragement, are assured, that "Christ will appear unto the salvation of them that look for him." Such is the character, and such the recompence promised to his genuine disciples, in the early ages of christianity. And, in these latter times, notwithstanding a prevailing indifference to the cause of true piety, and the sceptical, arrogant, superficial, frivolous, or licentious character of the age, yet we may find many exalted, and shining examples of probity and worth; many, in the quiet retreats, the retired walks of life, who, "like a light that shineth in a dark place," adhere to the practice of their duty with undeviating virtue and simplicity of conduct, enduring evil with constancy and patience, "not moved by any of those afflictions" which fall to their lot, but maintaining their integrity in the most trying circumstances, and thus doing honour
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to the religion they profess, and adorning the doctrine of God.

Such examples we have known. One such example is in the recent recollection of all present. The words, which led to the foregoing reflections, may justly be presumed to contain a delineation of the character, and prevailing habit of mind, of the worthy and virtuous person* who suggested them to our consideration; and the result of her experience of the effects and benefits of affliction. Her trials were great; but her succours were proportioned to her sufferings; and she bore them with an uncommon and exemplary fortitude, with a calm and patient dignity of mind. "We count them happy which endure." And, by the rational resources of knowledge, by strong powers of intellect, and a native vigour of mind, but especially by the aid of religious

* Mrs. Elizabeth Kippis was the daughter of Mr. Bott, a respectable merchant at Boston, in Lincolnshire. In September, 1753, she was married to the late Rev. Dr. Kippis, who died on the 8th of October, 1795, in the 71st year of his age. Mrs. Kippis survived about thirteen months, and died on the 17th of November, 1796, in her 72d year. See *Dr. Rees's sermon on the death of Dr. Kippis*, prin-

principle, and by that hope of christianity which is the noblest solace of the mind, she was enabled to endure affliction with the piety and resignation which became a christian. She was placed in a school of the severest discipline; and she proved a disciple that needed not to be ashamed. What is said of the great teacher of righteousness himself, may truly be applied to her, that she "learned obedience by the things which she suffered:" her mind was mellowed by sorrow, her virtues were matured by trials, and her heart was made better by adversity. Under the rigorous effects of a painful and lingering disease of almost ten years continuance, her body sunk into a state of general imbecility and decay; but her mind remained still unshaken and erect. During so tedious and melancholy a seclusion from the general intercourses of society, her earthly attachments, with a few exceptions, were nearly dissolved. But the irreparable loss of her excellent husband, after a connexion of forty-two years, was almost the only arrow remaining in the quiver of misfortune to wound her afflicted heart. Upon his

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removal, she was left, as it were, alone in the world: Till, at length, she obtained all she had to wish for here, a happy release from pain and sorrow, by the means of a natural and easy dissolution. She obeyed the awful mandate of death; and, with composure and solemnity of spirit, resigned herself into the hands of her maker, waiting for his salvation, in the well-grounded hope of his mercy unto eternal life.

It only remains, that I exhort you, after her virtuous example, in the holy exercise of faith, and hope, and trust in the divine promises, to bear patiently the visitations of the Almighty; and to “wait for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall also confirm you unto the end.”

Now may the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered awhile, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you! To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever! Amen.